

10/535316

2/pcts

JC20 Rec'd PCT/PTO 17 MAY 2005

VANM293.001APC

PATENT

INSTRUMENT FOR CRYOGENIC TREATMENTS IN THE MEDICAL,
PARAMEDICAL AND COSMETIC FIELD

5 Field of the invention

The present invention concerns an apparatus, which can be used for various cryogenic treatments as well in the medical or paramedical sector as in the cosmetic sector.

10 State of the art

Numerous dermatological diseases are currently treated with the cryogenic method by using a "jet" of gas, generally nitrous oxide (N_2O) at very low temperature. This cryotechnology is also used in other medical disciplines and
15 in cosmetic fields.

An instrument, among other things, is used, in which a cartridge of liquefied gas, for example N_2O , is introduced, which communicates, generally by perforating a membrane or a protective cap, with a microapplicator in the
20 form of a needle with a very small bore diameter, the whole being contained in a needle cover held by the operator's hand.

Other gas than N_2O (laughing gas) can of course be used.

25 The gas, contained in a liquid state in the cartridge in the form of gas, is expanded by the release of a "jet" at very low temperature (between about -28° and -90° C).

The jet is essentially made up of N_2O , partly
30 gaseous and partly liquid.

Two main and almost prohibitive difficulties appear during the implementation of this technique.

Indeed, it seems that impurities, essentially solid microparticles, are also present in the jet and they
5 quickly cause clogging-up of the microapplicator.

The applicant has observed that the impurities are essentially caused by residues from solvents used for preliminary cleaning of the cartridge or particles released during the perforation of the membrane or the protective cap
10 provided therefor on the cartridge.

Other impurities can, for example, come from friction between parts of the instrument's body or with the cartridge, during the introduction of the latter.

It is not excluded that the process of liquid
15 gas production is also a supplementary cause for the observed obstructions due to the presence of impurities in the gas when it is conditioned to cartridges.

Even tiny particles can cause important obstructions taking into account the very small dimension of
20 the bore diameter applied in the microapplicator and the effect of "nucleation" as will be referred to hereafter.

Another observed phenomenon is condensation of moisture contained in the atmosphere in the form of ice, which strongly contributes to the clogging-up depending on
25 the kind of material used for the manufacturing of the microapplicator, due to a phenomenon of "icing".

This phenomenon of "icing" can be observed especially, for e.g. metallic microapplicators. It also seems that the presence of impurities particles contributes to the
30 "icing" due to the effect of nucleation, i.e. condensation of

the atmosphere air under the form of ice on small particles possibly present in the "gaseous" jet.

Aims of the invention

5 The present invention aims at avoiding the described disadvantages of apparatuses according to the state of the art, in particular to avoid their clogging-up and to allow better performance by easing their use.

10 The present invention also aims at suggesting a process to interrupt a gas flow in particular in certain medical apparatuses.

Finally, the present invention aims at suggesting various possibilities of use in the medical, paramedical or cosmetic sector.

15

Summary of the invention

The applicant has observed that the optimal operating conditions rely on the principle that a microapplicator must show a bore diameter of about 20 to 20 120 µm and that a constant and regular flow of the liquefied gas contained in the cartridge can only be obtained if the foreign particles possibly present in the microapplicator's flow are such that those bigger than 3 µm and preferably bigger than 1 µm are eliminated. Means suitable for 25 eliminating particles comprised between 1 and 100 µm, but preferably between 3 and 60 µm according to the said bore diameter are preferably used.

This can be obtained by using a condensed gas that has undergone a preliminary purification to eliminate 30 solid materials.

However, in most of the cases, in practice it can be observed that even resorting to especially purified condensed gas does not necessarily solve the problem and according to a supplementary characteristic of the invention,
5 which corresponds to a preferred embodiment, it is foreseen that the microapplicator is supplied with a removable filter that retains particles bigger than 1 μm , preferably 1,5 μm .

Different kinds of filters can be used such as porous ceramic, cellulose material, etc.

10 To avoid that the filter progressively clogs up by accumulating particle deposits during the repetitive use of several successive cartridges in the same equipment, according to a particularly preferred embodiment of the invention the filter can be replaced after 1 to 20
15 replacements of the gas cartridge. It may be advantageous that the replacement of a cartridge automatically leads to the replacement of the filter with a new filter, avoiding the clogging-up of the microapplicator.

The applicant has also endeavoured to solve
20 observed difficulties as a result of the "icing", i.e. the sealing-off of the microapplicator with ice coming from the atmospheric moisture. He has noticed that the use of materials, in particular synthetic materials such as polycarbonate or a resin such as PEEK, strongly reduces this
25 phenomenon to the extent that possible phenomena of icing do not lead to a clogging-up.

Other materials, with suitable thermal conductivity characteristics e.g. glass, can suit to that end. The material must of course be selected to resist at the
30 same time at very low temperatures observed during treatment and at high temperatures necessary for sterilisation.

Moreover, the invention also aims at providing a disposable microapplicator suitable for the apparatus of cryogenic treatment as described.

Examples of uses in gynaecological, urological
5 or dermatological domains can be mentioned.

Regarding the use of the apparatus, it has been observed that it is advantageous to have the possibility to interrupt the gas flow during the use, so that the user can realise a short and precise treatment avoiding in particular
10 to treat healthy tissues.

The fact that the cartridge is not always empty when it is replaced can be dangerous for the user. At that end, it is foreseen to permit evacuation of the gas.

15 Short description of the drawings

Figure 1 represents a sectional view of the apparatus according to the invention.

Figures 2A to 2D represent various positions of a valve comprised in the apparatus.

20 Figure 3 represents a detailed view of the head of the apparatus illustrating the position of the filter.

The same reference numerals are used for identical constituent elements in the three figures.

25 Description of a preferred embodiment of the invention

The apparatus for cryogenic treatment comprises a body 1. On this body, a microapplicator 2, protected with a cover when not in use, is fixed in an impervious but removable manner.

30 On the back of the body 1, an insertion tube 6 is mounted. It can receive a condensed gas cartridge 8. An O-

ring 7 creates an impervious connection between the cartridge and the body 1. In use, when the cartridge 8 is in place, the mounting of the insertion tube 6 on the body 1 causes the perforation of a protective cap 11 that closes up the 5 cartridge 8 and permits so the communication through the pipe 10 between the cartridge 8 and the microapplicator 2 through a valve 3.

The microapplicator 2 has a bore diameter 4 of between about 20 to 120 μm , preferably of between about 35 to 10 80 μm . It is attached to a longitudinal pipe 10 with filter 14 interposed therebetween, preferably maintained in place on the front removable part and more specific at the back of the microapplicator 2.

The adjustment of the gas flow coming from the 15 cartridge 8 is realised by any device providing this function.

A valve 3 is provided between this device and the microapplicator 2, which is perpendicular to the pipe 10. The valve can have three distinct possible positions under 20 the effect of an electrical or mechanical control. In the first position, a longitudinal pipe 9 provides the communication so that the gas flows from the device of the flow adjustment to the microapplicator 2. In a second position the gas flow is blocked. The third position permits 25 that the residual gas, which is present in the cartridge 8, can escape.

In the preferred embodiment of the figures 2A to 2D, the valve 3 is represented closed, half-open, open and in the position for removal of residual gas from the 30 cartridge.

Before arriving at the microapplicator 2, the gas must pass through a filter 14 detailed in figure 3.

Using a filter 14 disposed on the microapplicator 2 is a particular advantageous solution since 5 the replacement of the filter is easily realised with the disassembly of the microapplicator 2, optionally together with the disassembly of the insertion tube 6 for the replacement of the cartridge 8. In this case, it is not necessary (though useful) to use an especially purified 10 condensed gas for the cartridge 8. The filter can be in the form of a disc receivable in a slot at the end of pipe 10 that is located in or on the microapplicator and maintained in place by a capsule. This capsule is perforated and can be separated from or consolidated with filter 14. The latter 15 solution facilitates the correct placement of the filter 14, the replacement of the filter being executed in this case with the replacement of the capsule.

Although particularly advantageous embodiments of the invention have been described, alternatives can be 20 provided for the described equipment, while staying within the scope of the claims.

The invention is not in particular limited to the indicated condensed gas, nor to the forms or dimensions of the suggested equipment.